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Statement on East Timor to the United Nations Special Committee on Decolonisation

by
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On behalf of the East Timor Alert Network, I wish to express our thanks to the committee for allowing our organisation to be represented at these hearings.

Mr. Chairperson and distinguished delegates:

The Indonesian assault on East Timor is a genocide supported by industrialised states, all members of the United Nations. The invasion, subsequent military operations and colonisation schemes, indeed the very existence of the aggressor regime itself, all are the direct result of first-world sponsorship.

Canada's role, which our network monitors, has been substantial, even pivotal. It has $1.4 billion invested in Indonesia; it contributes tens of millions of dollars yearly in funding and development aid; and it supplies the regime with an arsenal of military equipment. It's involvement, however, is not dissimilar in nature to that of the US, Japan, Australia, the UK and others. It serves, therefore, as but one example of the state export of genocide through the process called Development.

The Canadian government's position on East Timor was recently outlined by the secretary of state for external affairs, Joe Clark. As one would expect, he argues its case from a racist premise: "I should point out that there has never been any history of independence or self-government in the territory [East Timor],' true by definition in colonial discourse, since "history," "independence" and "self-government" exclude recognition of First Nations, except to revel in their obliteration.

The Timorese are also excluded from Clark's discussion of the "dialogue between Portugal and Indonesia on ... issues pertaining to East Timor", talks which, despite Portugal's efforts "have proceeded at a very slow pace" since 1982, while the rapid pace of East Timor's destruction proceeds unabated. It is apparently inconceivable to Clark that the Timorese should be represented. It is also worthy of note that Clark leaves unmentioned Bishop Belo's courageous letter to the UN Secretary General, as he does the fair and constructive peace proposal by leader of the Timorese resistance, Xanana Gusmao.

In the next paragraph, we are assured that: "In the meantime, Canada is not standing idly by," where Clark implicitly takes at least partial credit for the "relaxed travel restrictions to East Timor" - Indonesia's latest public relations effort in the international sphere, which has not in the least "relaxed restrictions" imposed on the Timorese. Nonetheless, this development he attributes to talks he had in 1987 with the Indonesian foreign minister, where he "raised our concerns about reports of human rights abuses and the generally low standing of living there," but not the right to Timorese self-determination.

The self-congratulation is, of course, irrelevant; what is fundamental is the notion that talks with the aggressor state are legitimate, not legitimating, and that this state would respond (in a positive way) to "concerns" from an investor state that increases investment and economic aid. Sanctions, of course, are much too indiscreet in the quiet diplomacy of "constructive engagement," even non-existent ones against South Africa leading to "sanction fatigue," as Clark told the world last year.

Still, "I want to state for the record ... that Canada's commercial interests in Indonesia have not caused us to shrink from taking a strong position on human rights. Some Canadian companies do have substantial investments in Indonesia. ... None, however, exists in East Timor."

But the fact that Canada has economic interests in Indonesia and not East Timor is precisely the issue. These investments are protected by a police state that enforces, through violence and oppression, a cheap, strike-free work force and a population too terrorised by government death squads and state decrees against "communist remnants" to protest corporate hegemony. It is this "investor's paradise" that the regime is attempting to impose on East Timor.

It is also an assault waged with Western military equipment. Once again, however, Clark tries to distance the Canadian government - and himself - from any complicity. "You should know that I personally review all applications for export of military equipment and restrict sales only to those items which are of a defensive nature and where there is no reasonable risk that the goods might be used against the civilian population. I should also say that, since 1985, I have refused permits for export of ammunition and other offensive materiel to Indonesia" (implicitly conceding that he has reviewed such applications).

Thus, not only does Clark get caught in a lie, he even implicates himself. *Jane's Defence Weekly* reported in 1986 that Canada Arsenals (IVI Ltd.) had been selling small ammunitions to Indonesia over several years. According to *CP News Report* (Jan. 22, 1987): Permits for arms sales worth $2,156,107 were issued to Canadian arms manufacturers for exports specifically to Indonesia." Bristol Aerospace, for example, has been exporting CR V-7 air-to-ground rockets to the regime. These rockets are best suited to counter-insurgency operations - the destruction of

villages and crops - though this does not present a "reasonable risk" to Clark that they "might be used against the civilian population" of East Timor, rockets, it seems, not being "offensive materiel."

Last February, the Canadian government announced the sale of 100 Pratt & Whitney engines, which are for Bell 412 military helicopters assembled in Indonesia. P&W is the largest recipient of government grants through the Defence Industry Productivity Program, receiving in 1982-3, for example, $52.5 million.

Other Canadian arms dealers provide Indonesia with security equipment, ammunition, military vehicles, radar equipment, parachutes, military radios and navigation systems for helicopters and planes. Far from restricting permits to arms dealers, External Affairs went as far as to host an arms show in Jakarta in 1984, which exhibited the wares of ten Canadian military manufacturers.

Mr. Chairperson and distinguished delegates:

Although Canada supports Indonesia directly in the regime's occupation of East Timor, it also contributes collectively with other states through the World Bank and other international consortia. The World Bank funds Transmigration, Indonesia's colonisation scheme, and its population control programme, the latter in particular having a devastating impact on East Timor. The beneficiaries of this assistance are not the Timorese, nor are they intended to be. By funding Transmigration, the Bank subsidises first-world engineering firms and building contractors; population control, pharmaceutical companies. In this way, the Bank shares the dubious distinction with tobacco companies of targeting women and the Third World to expand corporate markets.

Clark provides the justification for this funding. But before discussing "Canada's development assistance to Indonesia [sic: East Timor]," Clark inserts a paragraph which says much about the racist preconceptions behind such "development." His remarks concern West Papua, but apply equally to East Timor.

"With respect to the transmigration policy, our post advises us that it is proceeding on a modest scale [due to the slump in oil revenues. Had it not been for this reprieve, one observer predicted a "pogrom" in West Papua.] It should be remembered, however, that [West Papua] is among the least developed regions of the region. If living standards are to rise, economic growth is required and the necessary skills and capital may not be indigenous to the area."

In other words, the First Nations of West Papua, who have been thriving in their homelands for thousands of years, are not "developed" [read: like us, or aquiescent to our interests], lacking the "necessary skills" for "economic growth," namely the destruction of their lands through mining and clear cutting.

But whether or not it is proceeding on a modest scale, transmigration is a massive invasion, an attempt at consolidating military domination, or to put it in Canadian terms, driving home the last spike in West Papua and East Timor. We shouldn't be surprised that Clark - as with many other Canadians - misses this point entirely.

Development, then, should be veiwed with some caution. Roads in East Timor are built for the rapid deployment of troops, in West Papua, to patrol the border; schools teach the Indonesian state language (as Clark concedes) and ideology, local cultures being proscribed; Timorese fear hospitals, after numerous reports of sterilisation and the poisoning of children.

With the exception of the International Red Cross, which has very limited access to East Timor, foreign organisations are not allowed into the territory unless their programmes coincide with the regime's policy of "territorial management." Two of the organisations Clark mentions, UNICEF and Catholic Relief Services, have been criticised as fronts for Indonesian programmes in East Timor.

As for Indonesia's population control programme, Clark simply denies its existence, claiming that "we are not aware of any enforced birth control programmes in Indonesia, including [sic] in East Timor."

As Kiyoko Furusawa of the Free East Timor Japan Coalition reported to this committee last year, however: "According to BKKBN: the [Indonesian] Family Planning Coordinating Board, in 1987 59.7 percent of current participants in birth control programmes used ... contracptive injection, while in Indonesia on average 19 per cent of the participants took that method. [The injectable] is well known for its side effects, such as thrombosis (blood clotting), hepatitis, abnormal menstruation"; it is also possibly carcinogenic.

TAPOL - the Indonesia Human Rights Campaign reports that "The side effects of the more recently developed contraceptive implants are even less predictable than those of injectables. Yet is considered a matter of pride that half of the world's production of implants is absorbed by

Indonesia."

Furusawa goes on to say that women are coerced to take part in the programme, villages often being imposed with quotas, and that clinics are under the supervision of local military posts. Plainly, this is not family planning, but population control. It is an "adjunct to genocide."

Mr. Chairperson and distinguished delegates:

The UN has waited more than 14 years to take decisive action on Indonesia's occupation of East Timor, a hesitation that has cost over 200,000 lives. In my personal opinion, there is a structural reason for its complicity; the United Nations is comprised of states, working to ensure the presumed rights of corporations to maximise profits. Nations, namely First Nations, are excluded from membership, their inalienable rights denied. Yet, in spite of this betrayal, the Timorese continue to speak out for their freedom. As Timorese priests have pointed out, however, the right to free speech is not enough. The United Nations must commit itself to ensuring that the Timorese have the "right to be heard."

The East Timor Alert Network, therefore, strongly urges the committee to call for the immediate withdrawal of Indonesian troops and for recognition of the Timorese right to self-determination. It should also make the following recommendations:

- that UN member states cease all military sales to Indonesia
- that the World Bank cancel funding of Transmigration
- and, similarly, that the World Bank cancel funding of Indonesia's population control programme. Instead, the UN should ensure the reproductive rights of Timorese women by providing access to safe and voluntary birth control methods and information, dispensed by appropriate non-governmental organisations
- that all peace talks on East Timor include members of the Timorese resistance or of the Timorese exile communities in Australia and Portugal, and that their peace plans be on the agenda of such negotiations
- that, in light to the UN's response to the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait, sanctions against Indonesia are entirely appropriate and should be implemented
- and that free access be allowed to human rights groups of all regions of the territory as well as to non-governmental aid organisations that respect the wishes and cultural autonomy of the Timorese

Thank you.